



INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE STUDIES WITH ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF BALKAN AND BALTIC STUDIES

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**BALKAN AND BALTIC STATES IN UNITED EUROPE –  
HISTORY, RELIGION, AND CULTURE VI**

**MAGIC, HOLINESS AND MOUNTAINS**

*In Memory of Ekaterina Anastasova*



**3-5 October 2025**

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum

Address: Moskovska Street 6A, Sofia, Bulgaria  
(Entrance at the back of the building)

## **3 October (Day 1)**

**9.30-9.45 Registration**

**9.45-10.00 Opening of the Conference (Hall 19)**

**10-11.45 Panel I (Parallel sessions)**

**11.45-12.00 Coffee break**

**12.00-13.45 Panel II (Parallel sessions)**

**13.45-14.45 Lunch**

**14.45-16.30 Panel III (Parallel sessions)**

**16.30 – 17.00 Coffee Break**

**17.00-18.00 In Memoriam – Ekaterina Anastasova (Hall 19)**

**18.00 – Cocktail**

### **Hall 19**

#### **Panel I. Magic and space**

**Chair: Ivanka Petrova**

Dutchak Elena, Tomsk State University. *“Gateway to the Taiga”: A Zaimka as a Liminal Space*”. (ONLINE)

Svetlana Koch; Yuliia Uzun, Odessa National University. *“Interpretation of sacred spaces through political narratives: a comparative analysis of the Balkans and the Baltics”*. (ON SITE)

Reet Hiimäe, Estonian Literary Museum. *“Sacrality maps as a marker of vernacular identity building: the example of Ebavere sacred hill”*. (ONLINE)

Robert Piotrowski, Polish Academy of Sciences. *“The Supernatural Landscape of the Southern Baltic Lowlands: Moraine Hills, Erratic Boulders, and Devil’s Lakes in a Geofolklore Perspective”*. (ON SITE)

Aleksandar Bogdanov, Sofia University. *“Mapping the Sacred: Spatial Metaphors of Purity in the Shina and Kalasha Cosmologies”*. (ON SITE)

#### **Panel II. Mountains and sacred practices**

**Chair: Oksana Mykytenko**

Rasa Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė, Vytautas Magnus University. *“Comparative analysis of modern pilgrimage practices in the mountains or hills in Bulgaria and Lithuania”*. (ON SITE)

Georgi Mishev, independent researcher. *“THE BEAUTY ONE OF THE MOUNTAINS. Ritual practices for invoking, honoring and propitiating female divine powers associated with the mountains”*. (ONLINE)

Sanya Sachanska, IEFSEM - BAS. *“Mountain railroads - a way to explore the nature and the divine”*. (ON SITE)

Milena Lyubenova, IEFSEM - BAS. *“Cult Places and Sacred Trees - Tradition and Contemporary Cultural Practices”*. (ON SITE)

Neli Kirilova, Corvinus University of Budapest. *“Samodivski Tanci - Fairy Dance from Bulgaria’s Mountains: Magic or Healing Power? Assessing perceptions in contemporary practice of traditional horo dance”*. (ON SITE)

### **Panel III. Protection of Mountains, Animals and Spaces**

#### **Chair: Mare Kōiva**

Stelu Serban, The Romanian Academy. *“Environmental conservation and border management on the lower Danube”*. (ON SITE)

Stefan Dorondel, The Romanian Academy. *“(Dis)Connections. River Islands as a Web of Life”*. (ON SITE)

Svetoslava Toncheva, IEFSEM – BAS. *“Between the sacral and the profane – brown bear conservation in the mountains of Bulgaria”*. (ON SITE)

Yulia Sekushina, University of California Santa Barbara. *“Between Science, Magic, and Religion: The Materiality of Mineral Waters in Postsocialist Sanatoriums”*. (ONLINE)

Elana Resnik, University of California Santa Barbara. *“What is Sustainable Environmentalism in Bulgaria?”*. (ONLINE).

#### **In Memoriam: Ekaterina Anastasova**

Irina Sedakova. *“A tribute to the distinguished scholar Ekaterina Anastasova (1962 – 2025)”*. (ONLINE)

Žilvytis Šaknys. *“Scientist and friend. Ekaterina Anastasova in Lithuania and Bulgaria”*. (ON SITE)

Inese Runce. *“A tribute to our colleague and Friend”*. (ONLINE)

Mare Kōiva. *“Flowers don't grow singly”*, songs: Maria Korepanova, Nikolai Anisimov. (ON SITE)

Mariangela Anastassova. *“Ekaterina as a person, disclosed by one of her closest relative, first cousin and friend”*. (ON SITE)

## **Winter Garden**

### **Panel I. Beliefs and magic**

#### **Chair: Miguel Gallés Magri**

Галина Мишкинене, Институт литовского языка. “Верования и магия у литовских *татар*”. (ONLINE)

Eva Toulouze, INALCO, Paris/Tartu University. “*Magic and holiness in Udmurt vernacular prayers: moving towards profane?*”. (ON SITE)

Mihaela Grigorean, Satu Mare County Museum, Romania. “*The Sphinx of Oaş – an anthropomorphic rock of Romanian beliefs*”. (ON SITE)

Dalia Senvaitytė, Vilnius University. “*Hillforts as Sacred Spaces: Exploring Native faith pagan places in Contemporary Lithuania*”. (ONLINE)

Григор Григоров, ИЕФЕМ – БАН. “*Владелец как покоритель вершин: значение символического действия*”. (ON SITE)

### **Panel II. Magic, Sacrality and contemporary beliefs**

#### **Chair: Skaidrė Urbonienė**

Evgenia Troeva, IEFSEM - BAS. “*Spiritual Center Rayuvtsi – (Para)history and Esotericism*”. (ON SITE)

Laura Jiga Iliescu, The Romanian Academy/University of Bucharest. “*Shaping a new supernatural mountain*”. (ONLINE)

Inese Runce, University of Latvia. “*When Jesus is not a Jew: Orthodox teachings of Jānis Dāvis in 1930s*.” (ONLINE)

Māra Kiope, University of Latvia. “*The paradigm of "Soviet spirituality" in contemporary Latvian conspiratoriality*”. (ONLINE)

Mariya Slavcheva, IEFSEM - BAS. “*The Alchemy of Taste: Folk Medicine, Pelin, and Contemporary Mythmaking*”. (ON SITE)

### **Panel III. Sacrality and Festivity**

#### **Chair: Rita Kuzder**

Akvilė Sadauskienė, Lithuanian Institute of History. “*Case study: reflections of the mythological thinking of Rita and Vytautas in their everyday or festive life*”. (ONLINE)

Žilvytis Šaknys, Lithuanian Institute of History. *"Magic, holiness and contemporary society: Lithuanian St John's Day"*. (ON SITE)

Irina Kolarska, IEFSEM - BAS. *"The Celebration of the National Holiday in Latvia and Bulgaria - an Attempt at Comparative Analysis"*. (ON SITE)

Evy Johanne HÅLAND, SeniorUni Norge. *"A Saint Festival on the Magical, Holy Mountain, Tauros on the Island of Lesbos"*. (ONLINE)

## **4 October (Day 2)**

**9.30-11.30 Panel I (Parallel sessions)**

**11.30-11.45 Coffee break**

**11.45-13.45 Panel II (Parallel sessions)**

**13.45-14.45 Lunch**

**14.45-16.30 Panel III (Parallel sessions)**

### **Hall 19**

#### **Panel I. Sacred and Folklore**

##### **Cahir: Žilvytis Šaknys**

Aušra Kairaitytė-Užupė, Vilnius University. *"Saints and Hills: Expressions of Sacred in Lithuanian Folklore Tradition"*. (ONLINE)

Ana R. Chelariu, independent writer. *"Do not look back" - Orphean interdiction in myth and Romanian folktales"*. (ONLINE)

Elena Koroleva, Siberian Writer Foundation. *"Heroic Mountains: Folklore Landscape of Altai Historical Legends"*. (ONLINE)

Tommy Kuusela, The Institute for Language and Folklore, Uppsala. *"Trolls and Troll Mountains of Sweden"*. (ON SITE)

Mare Kõiva, Estonian Literary Museum. *"Sacred Caves and Cave Structures in the Ritual Practice of the Estonian population: Folkloristic and Religious Evidence and Modernity"*. (ON SITE)

Gabriela Boangiu, The Romanian Academy. *"Symbolic places in Romanian charms"*. (ONLINE)

Мария Корепанова, Эстонская академия музыки и театра. *"Магическая функция обрядовых песен в традиционной культуре удмуртов"*. (ON SITE)

## **Panel II. Religion and Communities**

### **Chair: Evgenia Troeva**

Anastasija Kovaliova, Vytautas Magnus University. *“The origin, development and socio-cultural role of the Orthodox community in Visaginas”*. (ONLINE)

Ольга Константиновна Шиманская, Российская академия наук. *“Старообрядцы Нижегородского Поволжья “на горах”: современный портрет”*. (ONLINE)

Софья Львовна Ронгонен, независимый исследователь. *“Латгальские староверы вокруг Балканских гор”*. (ON SITE)

Наталья Викторовна Литвина, МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова. *“Старообрядцы-часовенные Горной Шории: где и как можно сохранить веру”*. (ONLINE)

Nadežda Morozova, Institute of the Lithuanian Language. *“Sacral places and miraculous phenomena in the oral and written tradition of the Old Believers of Lithuania”*. (ONLINE)

Nadežda Pazuhina, University of Latvia. *“Eschatology and conspiracy theories in intellectual discourse of religious communities in Latvia”*. (ONLINE)

## **Panel III. Buddhism, shamanism and magic**

### **Cahir: Aleksandar Bogdanov**

Lyudmila Klasanova, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. *“Magical Mantras as Performative Utterances: The Siddhaikavīratāntra Through Speech-Act Theory”*. (ONLINE)

Rita Kuzder, Judit, Béres, Dharma Gate Buddhist College. *“Tibetan mountain gods and spirits through folklore texts”*. (ON SITE)

Proletina Robova, Sofia University. *“Performance of Place within the Shamanic Practice of Dayāl in Gilgit-Baltistan”*. (ON SITE)

Bembya Mitruiev, Kalmyk Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. *“Lamp Snuff Divination”*. (ONLINE)

## **Winter Garden**

## **Panel I. Sacrality, Magic and Memory**

### **Chair: Mihaela Grigorean**

Daniela Simeonova-Koroudjieva, IEFSEM - BAS. *“Damnatio Memoriae – practices in postmodern society”*. (ON SITE)

Skaidrė Urbonienė, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. *“Hills of Crosses in the Lithuanian Landscape: Sacred, Magical and Memorial sites”*. (ON SITE)

Райна Рождественска, ИЕФЕМ - БАН. *“Места памяти в д. Киселево – заброшенные и забытые в XXI в.”*. (ON SITE)

Николай Анисимов, Эстонский литературный музей; Татьяна Анисимова, Тартуский университет, *“Магические практики в контексте похоронно-поминальных ритуалов удмуртов: традиции, символизм и трансформации”*. (ON SITE)

Mariyanka Borisova, IEFSEM - BAS. *“Amulets in postmodern Bulgarian culture – origin, types, uses”*. (ON SITE)

Natalia Ermakov, Estonian Literary Museum. *“The content, structure and function of Ersä-Mordvin and Setu Laments”*. (ON SITE)

## **Panel II. Contemporary culture, society and the sacred**

### **Chair: Neli Kirilova**

Natalia Serebriannikova, independent researcher (Centre "Argentum"). *“Commercialization of Sacred Practices in Media Landscape: Anthropological Analysis”*. (ON SITE)

Irma Šidiškienė, Lithuanian Institute of History. *“Ethnologist in the face of migration challenges. A case study”*. (ON SITE)

Tanya Matanova, IEFSEM - BAS. *“The Other Sides of the Mountain – People with Disabilities in a Mountain(-like) Environment”*. (ON SITE)

Ivanka Petrova, IEFSEM - BAS. *“Magic and Sacred Between New Spirituality and Business. Organized spiritual practices in the mountains of Bulgaria”*. (ON SITE)

Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė, Lithuanian Institute of History. *“Outdoor leisure during a pandemic. The case of Lithuania”*. (ON SITE)

Halyna Stoianova, Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University. *“The Magical, the Sacred and the Mundane in the Professional Subculture of Sailors: Traditions and Modern Transformations”*. (ONLINE)

## **Panel III. Representation of the Sacred**

### **Chair: Eva Toulouze**

Oksana Mykytenko, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. *“The Epic World of Majestic Mountains in the Paintings of Sansyzbek Mirziraimov (Kyrgyzstan)”*. (ON SITE)

Miguel Gallés Magri, UAB Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. *“From Sinai to Sofia. Two new icons of the Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor”*. (ON SITE)

Jonas Mardosa, independent researcher. *“Origin and Chanting Tradition of Samogitian Calvary Kalnai (Hills)”*. (ON SITE)

Iulia Wisosenschi, Mihaela Nubert-Chetan, The Romanian Academy. *“CRUȚEA TU FRĂMȚI” – Traditional tattooing among Vlach women in the Republic of North Macedonia”*. (ONLINE)

Zdravka Mihaylova, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria. *“Saint Catherine’s monastery on Mount Sinai: the Biblical miracle of the burning bush as a reason for the establishment of a Greek Orthodox sacred religious institution”*. (ON SITE)

## **5 October (Day 3)**

**Excursion, all day (time of departure to be announced)**